Vol. 5 No. 2
Winter/Spring
Concordia University
1985

LE BULLETIN
INSTITUT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

INSIDE:

SPECIAL REPORT:
WOMEN AND THE INVISIBLE ECONOMY

EDITORS: Lucie Lequin
Laila Dhanani

Guidelines for contributors:

The Newsletter welcomes the submission of announcements, articles and other relevent material of interest. Manuscripts must be typed and double-spaced. Drawings, designs or cartoons must be in black and white. Enclose S.A.S.E. with any material that is to be returned. We do not offer any payment in any form (other than the acknowledgement) for any material we print. We reserve the right to edit material. However, we will respect the author's style and take care to retain the author's exact meaning.

Letters from readers:

We will print selected, signed letters. All letters for publication must include the writer's full name, address and telephone number. We will withold the writer's name on request. We regret that we cannot acknowledge or return unpublished letters.

Mailing Address:

The Simone de Beauvoir Institute Newsletter
2170 Bishop street
Montréal, Québec
H3G 1M8

Telephone: (514) 879-8523

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Special Report:
Women and the Invisible Economy.....4
Learning.....7
UN End of Decade Conference.....8
Is Equity Enough?.....10
Your Letter Saved a Life.....12
Women and Health.....14
Literary Theory and the Feminist Imperative.....16

La Langue et La Genre.....20
This is a She-Bop.....22
La Detresse et L'Enchatement.....24
Love and Marriage in the Great Country Houses.....26
Motherwork: Call for Papers.....27
Alele Tipitomba.....28
Feminist Men?.....30
Update on the Reading Room.....32

Report from the Co-Curricular Committee.....34

Weekend at Lacolle.....35
Building Bridges: Mini-Conference..36
Film Pernicieux en Ville.....37
Reflections of my Father's Table...40
Hey Marge?.....41

Views expressed in this Newsletter are that of the individual authors and not necessarily shared by the Institute.

SPECIAL REPORT:

WOMEN AND THE INVISIBLE ECONOMY

by the Conference Coordinator: Dr. Suzanne Peters

Over 225 women from across Canada came to Montreal February 21, 22, and 23 1985 to participate in raising consciousness and analysis of women's invisible work. This conference was sponsored by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under the Strategic Grants Division: Women and Work.

Conference events opened Thursday evening with a keynote address by Louise Vandelac of the Université du Québec à Montréal. Professor Vandelac, who has just published a book on women's domestic work, Du Travail et de l'Amour : Les dessous de la production domestique suggested in her talk some of the limitations of conventional economic concepts when applied to women's working experiences in the home. She raised questions about our conceptualization of "time" and "product" in an analysis borrowed largely from the discrete description of market tasks, and suggested the need for alternative portrayals of the rythm of domestic work as on-going recapitulations of everyday life.

Papers by 25 feminist scholars formed the core of workshops and discussions over the next two days of the conference. Paper authors and titles included:

. Marianne Ainley	Amateur Women Scientists
. Isabella Bakker	Feminist Materialism and Economic Activity
. Daniele Blais	La Garde Informelle des enfants
. Leslie Brown	Women's Community Work
. Louise Columbe-Joly	Les femmes au foyer
. Tanis Day	Canadian Housework
. Ann Denis	"Helping Out" in Family Enterprise
. Jo-Anne Elder	Revising Myths of Motherhood
. Patricia Fleming	The Relationsip of Housework to Health
. Michel Grant	Travail à domicile
. Nancy Guberman	If Only I Had Time

. Jane Haddad	Sexism and Social Policy
. Anita Heller.	Women and Health Guardians
. Suzanne Klein	Liberal Ideology
. Jane Lewis	The future of Work
. Kathleen Martindale . .	Women Volunteers in Feminist Organization
. Suzanne Mackenzie . .	Informal Childcare Networks
. Nancy Netting	The "Job-Free" Alternative
. Marilyn Porter	The Quest for Marxist-Feminist Concepts
. Harriet Rosenberg . . .	The Kitchen and the Multinational Corporation
. Francine Senecal . . .	Les femmes et le bénévolat
. Dorothy Smith	Mothering and Schooling
. Yoko Ueda	Corporate Wives and Gendered Education
. Barry Wellman	Domestic Work, Paid Work and Net Work
. Mona Wynn	Selling Mrs. Consumer

A set of research workshops focusing on theory, housework, motherwork,and volunteer work gave these participants and others attending a chance to share their ideas and questions in defining issues surrounding the invisibility of women's work. The conference program also included workshops with women's action groups, films, and photo and book exhibits.

Two panel discussions at the conference, one on "Social Policies for Homemakers", and one on "Volunteerism, Self-Advancement, or Exploitation?" attempted to incorporate political and popular discussions of the issues of women's invisible work with its academic analysis. In retrospect, this bridging of worlds remains the greatest barrier to our understanding and analysis of women's invisible work, and to collective understanding of our possible alternatives as feminists and feminist scholars.

In this context, one of the most positive notes struck at the conference was the decision taken by participants to join other Canadian women in requesting for government integrity in the funding of programs within the women's program of the Secretary of State. The following telegraphs were sent by the conference, as well as having been sent by thousands of individual women across Canada, in an effort to determine policy according to guidelines of sex equality:

to: The Honourable Walter Maclean
Secretary of State and Minister
Responsible for the Status of Women
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

- We thank you for your continuing work for the Status of Women in Canada and request your assurance that government funds go only to those groups which support sex equality under article 15 or the Charter of Rights -

to: The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

- We request your assurance that government funds go only to those groups which support sex equality under article 15 of the Charter of Rights. -

This effort to join analysis and action, to demand recognition of women's equality, seems to me as conference coordinator a fitting tribute to the increasing visibility of women's work and lives. Please join in this effort by sending a telegram of your own.

As a final note, I would like to thank all those who helped in organizing and implementing the idea of the conference. As I told several people in the last weeks, "having a conference is very like having a baby", especially in the anxiety and hard work that go into the long anticipation and labour before the great event. It was wonderful for me as coordinator to find that my "baby" came out with all her fingers and toes, and I'd especially like to thank the midwives to this birth who were my main support, in particular, Laila Atta, Elizabeth Sacca, Robin Ward, Jeanne Mayo, Paula Siepnie , Françoise Auclair, Laila Dhanani, Louise Barrette, Nancy Gay, Manon Groulx, Bonnie McEarchern, Cindy Harris.

For help in funding simultaneous translation, thanks to the Concordia Women's Students Association and the Concordia Women's Collective.

Finally, thanks to Rick and my two other babies, Matthew and Emma.

L E A R N I N G

by Mary Ruggles

(Two years ago the Centre for Mature Students made arrangements for people over sixty years old to audit certain courses for a nominal fee. A number of these "Seniors" have enjoyed the introductory women's studies courses, and have contributed from their experience. The following article is by one of them.)

When I registered for this course, I wasn't sure what to expect. I wasn't sure of just what exactly women's history was. I didn't know women had a history. I felt history had no connection with me. I thought history was Jacques Cartier, Christopher Columbus, Francis Drake. Women like Catherine the Great and Queen Victoria were not given equal treatment in history books.

I especially enjoyed Victorian Women. I learned how women were treated in Victorian days. I learned about their working conditions. Before I took this course, I had believed that Victorian women were treated like queens. But now I know this was only the picture presented to us in old history books. I know there were poor women then but had not idea of just how much they suffered mentally and physically. I always thought this kind of treatment was reserved for people who weren't white.

Being black I could relate to their suffering and being treated as non-persons. I also read the book Black Women in White America, which details the life of black women in America during Victorian times. I would have liked to have gone into this subject more in the course. But now that I understand more about women in general, I realize a course on Black and Third World women's history would be even more difficult to find. Now I am more aware that there are certain things in being a woman that transcend race, colour, religion, or country of origin. I was especially happy to have had a teacher who explained things so well that even with my little education and little exposure to feminism, I was able to understand and grow and learn. At my age even though I'm older than the rest of the class, I want to continue learning more about women in Society and their history, their future, and their present.

Had I had these courses when I was young I'm sure my life would have veen different. How? I do not know. I hope this generation of women will learn from history and take advantage of it instead of ignoring it; especially black women, as I had it and my ancestors before me. I also want my daughters to learn from what I have learnt from it.

UNITED NATIONS END OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DECADE CONFERENCE

July 10-26, 1985
Nairobi, Kenya

By Victorya E. Monkman

As busy and involved as we all are, working in our day-to-day lives to extend women's social, economic and political space in our own culture, we cannot often take the time to consider the global situation of women. The figures may be familiar: Women compose over half of the planet's human population and one-third of the global labour force; we receive one-tenth of world revenues and own less than 17 percent of the world's goods and property in our own right.

To focus world attention on women's issues, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 1975 International Women's Year and called for a conference in Mexico City. The participants at the conference identified social, economic and political equality for women, integration of women in the development process and world peace as the most pressing areas for immediate and serious consideration and action by the world community. A world action strategy proposed specific goals for 1980. Since the problems raised were of such magnitude, the conference recommended the declaration of International Women's Decade 1975-1985.

The mid-Decade conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980. Its mandate was to evaluate progress on the designated priority issues and to modify strategies in the light of the success or failures of the first five years. The concerns of the Mexico meetings were re-affirmed while education, health and employment were added to the list of global priorities.

In May of 1980, Unesco had officially recognized Women's Studies (Research and Teaching related to Women) as a distince academic pursuit. Mair Verthuy, then the Principal of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, was one of the twelve experts from around the world invited by Unesco, to plan and execute an initial meeting of women scholars. The Simone de Beauvoir Institute co-sponsored seven days of debates, lectures and discussions during the Copenhagen Conference and called Women's Studies International. The FEMME Conference at Concordia in 1982 was the follow-up meeting and first international conference on Research and Teaching related to Women.

Although we speak of the Conference, two parallel conference are being organized in fact in Nairobi. One, the official conference attended by the representatives of national governments,tends to have its effectiveness diminished by diplomatic rhetoric and procedural wrangles. Many official delegates prefer to attend the parallel meeting of representatives of non-governmental organizations and individual women. This conference, called the Tribune in 1975 and the Forum in 1980 reflects the dynamic and international nature of feminist militancy and the denunciation of patriarchal structures. It is at the Forum that women's culture and commonalities are most evident. In 1975, 1300 participants from 133 countries attended the official conference while 6000 from 100 countries attended the Tribune. In 1980, 1200 participants from 145 countries attended the conference and 8000 from 128 countries attended the Forum.

The end of the Decade will be celebrated in Nairobi, Kenya this Summer from July 10-26. The impact of a decade of activities on behalf of women will be evaluated. Conference organizers have given particular attention to the most vulnerable of us: rural women, women living under apartheid, refugees and women displaced from their homes by the military and political upheavals of patriarchy. If the previous gatherings over the last ten years are any indication, the meetings in Nairobi will prove an invaluable opportunity for us to sense that we really are joined in sisterhood and to enjoy the creative energy of the women of this planet.

KOMBA, a non-profit organization, sponsored by the Institute is organizing a charter trip to the non-governmental Forum. For further information, please contact Véronique or myself

Is Equity Enough?

by Maria E. Peluso

Though no one will deny the need for 'equity' in all our endeavours, especially in the area of employment for women, we also recognize, as feminists that equity as a concept implies that people in general and that governments in particular, are highly principled and that they somehow possess a natural tendency, morally, to ensure fair play and good faith. For feminists to think of equity in these terms is highly romantic.

From as far back as the seventeenth century women realized that equality would not 'happen' by simply believing in liberal political and judicial principles, albeit however sincere.Our history is a testament to the economic disparity and the inequitable treatment of women. Consider the following facts about women and employment in Canada:

- In 1982, average male earnings were $25,096 compared to average female earnings of $16,056

- 77% of women in the labour force are in only five of the 22 major job categories – sales, clerical, services, health and teaching.

- In 1982, a woman with a university degree earned the same as a man with a high school education.

The Canadian Royal Commission's October 1984 report Equity Employment by Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella illustrates the need to address systemic discrimination. By the terms of reference of the Commission, Judge Abella was appointed to inquire into the most efficient, effective and equitable means of promoting employment opportunities for and eliminating systemic discrimination against four designated groups: women, native people, disabled persons, and invisible minorities. The process includes an examination of the employment practices of 11 designated crown and government-owned corporations.

The Report with regards to women in employment advocates a number of important measures to ensure a more equitable relationship between men and women within the federal government departments and agencies. More noteably, some of these recommendations include: contract compliance, flexible work time and childcare arrangements, language training, job re-entry training and skill development. Employment Equity does not advocate affirmative action in the form of quotas nor does it establish any new legislation.

The Report goes further to state that government could serve as an example to the private sector for eventually implementing equity programs of their own. The extent, however, that the patriarchal apparatus of government actually serves as a role model for society is questionable (see Vickers, Miles, Finn etc) .

What is important to retain from the Abella Report is the fact that equity rather than legislative affirmative action is what is considered to be important. No doubt to advocate equity as a government policy is efficient - sincerity does not add on any costs.

Judge Rosalie Abella's measures to ensure equality for women in the workplace, as outlined in her Report and again most recently in her speech to the Centre For Research-Action In Race Relations is a sensitive assessment of the self-perpetuating systemic discrimination of women in the workplace. She recognizes that " . . . equality will not happen unless we make it happen." My question is whether "equity" as defined in the Report will go far enough for women in employment? As feminists have we not moved beyond the discussion on equity? Is the equity approach, now after the seventies, just simply an anachronism in the feminist debate?

YOUR LETTER SAVED A LIFE

by Pierre Leduc*

Most of the time, when a TV journalist does a story, he doesn't have any idea of how the story is perceived by the public. The journalist seldom knows whether his story has made any difference.

Last fall, I did a piece that did make a difference. Something happened out there, among some of the people who say my story about a woman who seemed doomed to die.

The woman's name is Manon. The story was part of a series for PULSE PROBE about how the criminal justice system fails to protect society from violent offenders.

Manon was perhaps a typical crime victim. She had met young Cuban through her activities as a volunteer to help Latin-Americans settle in Canada. Her new friend's name was Celestino Fernandez-Hernandez. He soon became Manon's worst enemy. He literally took over her life. He beat her, made her support him, and when she decided she'd had enough, he tried to strangle her. She was saved by an alert neighbour. Several weeks later, Fernandez-Hernandez attacked Manon with two kitchen knives. He fled when the same neighbour came to her rescue. Fernandez-Hernandez was caught and sent to prison for two years.

As he was led off to serve his term, Fernandez-Hernandez shouted to Manon that when he got hold of her again, he would shoot her. By a stroke of good luck, the threat was recorded on the courtroom tape which had continued to record for a few minutes after the trial was over. We broadcasted the threat as part of Manon's story.

The other part of the story was that Fernandez-Hernandez was going to be released from prison on December 10th, 1984. That was just two months away.

The public reaction was immediate. Requests for transcripts came in. People phoned to ask what could be done to save Manon's life. Around the same time, a young woman was shot dead in the West Island, even though the police had known her ex-husband had threatened to kill her. Then the Simone de Beauvoir Institute organized a letter-writing Campaign to help save Manon. Canadian Immigration authorities requested copies of the program. They passed everything on to the new minister in charge, Flora MacDonald, whose desk was already piled high with your letters.

The Minister ordered her people to pick up Fernandez-Hernandez the day her was released from the Federal prison at Cowansville. He was held in Parthenais Prison in Montreal, as a danger to society. On December 20th, 1984, Fernandez-Hernandez was ordered deported. He appealed. Manon was called as witness. A week later, the Immigration Appeal Board announced the deportation order would stand. Manon's nightmare was over. Celestino Fernandez-Hernandez would be deported to his native Cuba as soon as the Cuban authorities arranged for a passport.

The people at Immigration made it clear to me that the public's reaction - the letters - were crucial to fixing the Minister's resolve to press for deportation in this case. Your reaction to Manon's story, helped to save her life.

*Pierre Leduc is a reporter/producer with CFCF-TV in Montreal. He works regularly with AS IT IS (Sundays: 6 pm) and on PULSE PROBE in the summer.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Career Areas for Women's Studies Students

by Dr. Elizabeth Henrik

Are you concerned about the social impact of medical technology? The health hazards of working environments? The use of harmful medical products such as the Dalkon Shield, DES? Your legal rights as applied to health care? You may want to consider a career in the social aspects of medicine and women's health and have an impact on health practices.

There is an interesting program at the University of California, San Francisco which is part of a larger Women, Helath and Healing Project. Dr. Virginia Alesen, Dr, Sheryl Ruzek and Dr. Ellen Lewin have conceived and developed the project in order to stimulate research, health, policy analysis, and the development of curriculum on the social and behavioral aspects of women's health. One part of the Project is a specialization program in Women, Health and Healing at the masters and doctoral levels. The program offers an integrated series of graduate courses on women and health in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. It is a multidisciplinary program. Faculty are drawn from the social sciences women studies, nursing, medicine, public health and social welfare departments. The program admits a limited number of non-degree students.

The Project is an outgrowth of the earlier work of the directors. Drs Lewin, Ruzek, and Olesen have been active on women's issues in professional associations, community organizations and research. Dr. Olesen has published on issues of women such as nursing careers, clerical work, etc.. since the 1950's. She developed one of the first courses on the social behavioral aspects of women's health in 1973. She is currently working on the health implications of automation for clerical workers. Dr. Lewin has done research on health issues for Latina Women. Dr. Ruzek's work is on the effect of occupacional and family strain on heart disease in women. They have written, edited, and co-edited several books on the women's health movement, social effect of medical technology, health careers of

women policy issues of health.

Graduate students enrolled in the specialization program have excellent role models in these three women who combine academic excellence and personal committment to women's health issues. Women's Studies students would find such a program very rewarding. It could satisfy the need for a professional career and of making an impact on Women's issues. Students would be prepared to examine the social psychological consequences of many health practices, to effect policy changes in the health care system and to contribute to the advancement of the Women's Health Movement. What better perspective for serious women devoted to women!

Another part of the Project is the summer Institute. It is a residential program designed for faculty who teach or plan to teach women's health. I was enrolled in the Institute last summer which was the first of the three planned, the second one being offered this summer. The Institute was held on the Berkeley campus and lasted for two very full weeks.

We had lecture sessions, workshops, participants initiated meetings. Some of the sessions were conducted by the directors. However, most of them were covered by faculty drawn from other departments. We discussed a wide range of topics : the health issues of native American women, women's reproductive life, and reproductive hazards, teaching methods of women and health, curriculun development, mental health, health policy analysis.

We visited women's health centers and community cliniques located in the Bay Area. One of these, the Lyon Martin Clinic, stated out as a small, women- initiated health group for lesbian women. Today, the clinic is an important community clinic, providing services to a wide variety of women clientele and their husbands. It is run entirely by women and it is success story about the capabilities of women health workers.

In the collegial environment of the Institute we not only learned a lot but also got to know each other as professionals and as women. The Institute provided us an intellectually and emotionally rewarding two-weeks learning.

People interested in the graduate program of the Institute may write to Dr. Virginia Olesen, Dept. of Social and Behavioral Sciences, School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, CA 94143.

Literary Theory and the Feminist Imperative

by: Bina Freiwald

Spring might be a long month away according to the official calendar, but at least in one area of critical inquiry the harbingers of spring can already be heard, clear and loud. Feminist literary criticism is in the air, and it is breathing new life into the aged and tired body of literary theory. It is a welcome breath of fresh air, and it has been long overdue. It was only a few years ago, we recall, that a book which purported to be a comprehensive account of contemporary literary theory and which was hailed as authoritative and insightfull--Frank Lentricchia's After the New Criticism (1980)--did not so much as acknowledge the existence of feminist criticism. Lentricchia, for all we know, might still be thinking the whole enterprise a fantastic scheme, as chimerical, perhaps, as the occultist experiences of Madame Elena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the very few women he did see fit to mention, if only in passing, in his book. It seems, however, that the spirit of Madame Blavatsky has come back to haunt Lentricchia who is now having his claims pronounced empty and unreal. As Jonathan Culler has recently pointed out, the omission of feminist criticism from Lentricchia's avowedly historical account "casts doubt upon his claim to historical understanding and his authority to criticize others for their lack of it" (On Deconstruction, p. 42).

As the discipline's self-appointed guide into the unfolding mysteries of critical discourse, Culler himself is most anxious to succeed where his predecessor has so shamefully failed. In his On Deconstruction (1982), a book in which he undertakes an exposition of what he has found most vital and significant in recent theoretical writing, Culler not only devotes a whole section to feminist criticism ("Reading as a Woman"), but unequivocally pronounces feminist criticism to have had a greater effect on the literary canon than any other critical movement, and to have been "one of the most powerful forces of renovation in contemporary criticism" (p. 30). Nor is Culler's a lone voice in the pluralistic wilderness of recent critical thought. The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton has bestowed on feminist criticism his highest terms of praise, singling it out as the paradigm for a revolutionary literary criticism (in his Walter Benjamin, 1981) and as an exemplary case of "political criticism" (in his Literary Theory, 1983).

In certain circles, it would seem, the word is out. Feminist literary criticism, which has reinstated women as both readers and writers of texts, and which draws on and engages with the wide range of methodological and conceptual issues raised by recent critical thought (but is not limited to them), has a great deal to offer by way of focalizing these issues and affecting real change. The word has even reached the most prestigious publications in the field. In a recent essay published in a special issue of Critical Inquiry devoted to "Canons" (September 1983), Lawrence Lipking observes that while some of the most sophisticated speculations in contemporary theory still leave the canon--what is studied--firmly in place, the flames of an emerging feminist literary history "can scorch and burn." Lipking, like Culler and Eagleton, does not want to go up in smoke like so much outdated masculinist scribbling; he would rather join in the celebration of this fire which he knows "not even our secret places--our language, our habits of learning--can be immune from." In the same vein, the recently collected Professon 84 (a publication of the Modern Language Association of America), which features an intriguing feminist-allegorical essay by Sandra Gilbert ("The Education of Henrietta Adamas"), also carries two theoretical essays (by Prince and Lindenberger) which reaffirm the place of feminist theory in the curriculum and further recognize the contributions of feminist criticism to an emerging literary history concerned not only with literary and interpretive traditions but with society as a whole.

The reasons for this newly-found centrality of feminist theory can be found in an agenda common to the critical movements which claim affinity with feminist criticism, an agenda that is gaining ground as literary critics become increasingly alarmed by their growing professional isolation and social marginalization. In essay after essay, in book-length studies and conference presentations, literary critics have been expressing their exasperation at the growing insularity of their discipline, and a desire to open up the conversation to what lies outside the strictly literary. In the words of Edward Said, literary critics are now searching for a critical practice that would affirm "the connections between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events" (The World, the Text, the Critic). Such a critical practice would investigate the ways in which writing is always enmeshed in the historical, social, and ideological fabric of a society. In doing so it would enable us to restore to the text that context which brings it to life as an event, and to restore to us, as

readers and critics, a renewed sense of "the greater stake in historical and political effectiveness that literary, as well as all other, texts have had" (p. 714).

As anyone familiar with women's writing would recognize, such a desire to bring together the experiential and the symbolic, literature and lived experience, has always been at the core of feminist thought. As far back as 1405, we recall, Christine de Pizan could successfully counter her society's disparaging view of women (a view powerfully inculcated through books) by employing a radical critical procedure which brought women's experience to bear directly on the texts in which they were represented. In The Book of the City of Ladies Christine challenged the dominant perception of women as lacking in any positive faculty by publicly scrutinizing "her own character and conduct as a natural woman." Having similarly considered the character and conduct of other women whose company she often kept, "princesses, great ladies," but also "women of the middle and lower classes," Christine could finally conclude: "to the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behaviour and character of women" (p. 4). Christine's determination not to let experience be divorced from representation thus enabled her to view the literary tradition critically. It turned her into what Judith Fetterley has called a "resisting reader," a reader able to dissociate herself from the distorted figure which the literary tradition holds up to her as her true image. Ultimately, Christine was able not only to expose the self-interests which motivate masculinist representations of the female character, but also to proceed to investigate the subject on her own terms, imaginatively re-writing women's history in a constructive and empowering way.

Today, over four centuries later, feminist critics are still rediscovering the immediate relevance to their own situation of the program proposed by Christine de Pizan. The poet and critic Adrienne Rich reiterates the main project of The Book of the City of Ladies when she proposes a feminist critique of literature that would "take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been lead to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, ... how we can begin to see and name--and therefore live--afresh" (On Lies, Secrets, and Silence, p. 35). What this approach entails is, first and foremost, an historicist reading of literary texts which takes into account the

mutual articulation of the aesthetic and the ideological, which does not ignore the relation of the literary to the private, and does not leave matters of community out. Rich's imperative, moreover, casts a heavy shadow on the accepted criteria for canon-selection, the criteria, that is, for the selection of what is deemed (at a given time) worthy of preservation, transmission, and interpretation. For the "we" in Rich's critical model acknowledges a world in which, to borrow H. Bruce Franklin's formulation, "most people are nonwhite, over half are female, [and] the overwhelming majority are workers" (English Literature: Opening up the Canon, 1981).

The imperative of feminist criticism is thus one with which both men and women can identify, for it involves a theory of language and meaning capable of functioning both as an explanatory matrix--in describing how old meanings came about--and as a liberating agent, allowing us to fashion new, more satisfying, meanings. Indeed, both our understanding of the past and our plans for the future can be greatly revitalized by a critical perspective which takes language to be, in the words of James Boyd White, "not stable but changing," since it is "perpetually remade by its speakers, who are themselves remade, both as individuals and as communities, in what they say" (When Words Lose Their Meaning, 1984).

The revisionary program implicit in such an understanding of the relationship between the self, the text, and the world is perhaps best exemplified by Mary Daly's radical metaethical statement that "to exist humanly is to name the self, the world, and God" (Beyond God the Father, 1973).

****

NEEDED: SHARED CUSTODY KIDS

Kids from 6 to 15 years of age are needed for research by McGill University. Confidential. Call Ms. Chan after 5 p.m. at 288 0383.

LA LANGUE ET LE GENRE

par Linda Cormier

Plusieurs féministes contemporaines rejettent les mots female et woman sous prétexte qu'ils dérivent de male et man, et perpétuent ainsi une définition de la femme d'après l'homme. Or cette approche est androcentrique et a -historique, car l'origine des mots female et woman diffèrent de celle de male et man.

Casey Miller et Kate Swift nous apprennent, dans leur ouvrage Words and Women , que dans le vieil anglais (Old English) man signifiait "a human being of either sex", alors que woman désignait à la fois "a female and a human being". (1)

Et "wif" and "we " étaient, selon les auteures, "the words used for an adult female and male respectively". (2)

Mais avec le temps, le statut des femmes dans la société s'étant détérioré, leur place dans la langue s'en est trouvée réduite et le terme "man" en est venu à comprendre, "human being, the human race and adult male"(3) alors que le terme "woman" s'est vu restreint aux significations suivantes: "adult human female, the female sex"(4).

Mais qu'en est-il dans les années '80? Mon Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, édition 1981, m'apprend que le mot "woman" s'applique à "adult female person " (5), alors que le mot "man, beaucoup plus ambitieux, désigne "a human being, expecially but not exclusively, of course! : an adult male human".(6)

Au siècle dernier, Victor Hugo a dit avec justesse, que toute révolution devrait s'accompagner d'une réforme du dictionnaire(7) Ce dernier reflète en effet une langue qui n'est pas neutre, car elle est contrôlée par les groupes dominants d'une société, qui s'en servent pour perpétuer leur pouvoir. Elle a ainsi été utilisée par les hommes pour opprimer les femmes, et par conséquent ces dernières doivent, selon l'expression de Mary Daly, "learn to dis-spell the language of phallocracy". (8)

En fait nous devons nous ré-approprier le language, colonisé depuis trop longtemps par les hommes, pour en faire enfin un instrument de notre libération.

* * * *

NOTES

1. Casey Miller et Kate Swift, Words and Women, New York, Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1976, p.89-90.

2. Ubid, p.90.

3. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1964, p. 739.

4. Ubid, p. 1502.

5. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981, p. 1338.

6. Ubid, p. 691.

7. Cité par Howard Scott, dans Louky Bersianik's L'Euguelionne: Problems of Translating the Critique of Language

   In New Quebec Feminist Writing, M.A. (SIP), Concordia University 1984, p.54

8. Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, 1978, p.4

INSTITUT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

CO-EDITORS: LAILA DHANANI LUCIE LEQUIN
PRODUCTION: LAILA DHANANI FRANCOISE AUCLAIR

Abonnement annuel/Annual subscription:
$10 Institution
$ 6 Particuliére(es)/Individual
$ 4 Etudiant/e/Student

THIS IS A SHE-BOP by Victorya E. Monkman
P.S. C391/2

... the journey is rough
from the foreground maze
to the wild realm of Hags and Crones

Self-centered womyn
Spinster
weaving webs of words
Naming
"the active longing that propels a womyn
into her own 'country', the Realms of Elemental Reality,
of ontological depth" [1]
male method of mystification: erasure
reversal
false polarization
divide and conquer
processions: the deception of the fathers
womyn silenced/split by the embedding of fear
appropriation of GYNERGY

****pause - deep breath*****

Release of deep fury: the exorcism of
the internalized Godfather
focused gynergetic will: the force of reason
rooted in instinct
intuition
passion

untamed
untracable
wanton
lusty
farouche
sauvage
weird
willful
a-mazing

Amazons Prudes and Scolds

labyris mirror
snake

Isis Astarte Artemis Emma Laurie Anderson agree
Womyn's power begins neither in the courts
nor at the polls
It begins in womyn's souls
dancing the spiral dance ...

LA DETRESSE ET L'ENCHANTEMENT

Gabrielle Roy
Montreal, Boreal Express, 1984, 505 p.

par Lucie Lequin

Ce livre est la toute dernière oeuvre que nous ait laissée la grande évrivaine. Il réunit les deux volets de l'autobiographie qu'elle avait commencé d'écrire vers 1976, intitulés respectivement "Le bal chez le gouverneur" et "Un oiseau tombé sur le seuil". La première partie raconte la vie de Gabrielle Roy au Manitoba jusqu'à son départ pour l'Europe, la deuxième relate le séjour en Europe, en France et en Angleterre, puis le retour à Montréal en 1939, où elle décide de se fixer.

Cette autobiographie fascine d'abord par sa mise à nu des contradictions de Gabrielle Roy. L'auteure y vit à la fois la détresse et l'enchantement qu'elle doit à tout prix assimiler et dénouer pour plus tard les transposer en création.

Au fil du vécu raconté, Gabrielle Roy retrouve ses sources -- son enfance, sa famille et son milieu manitobain - et aussi la genèse de quelques-unes de ses oeuvres. Se dégagent de ce pregnant besoin de ressourcement une intensité et une qualité de présence qui font font du bien. Et pourtant, cette autobriographie s'enracine dans la simplicité et évite de jouer sur le narcissisme débordant.

De l'écriture, toujours alimentée au vaste réservoir d'impressions, d'émotions, de connaissance de l'écrivaine, sourdent ses préoccupations temporelles que la création s'emploie à circonscrire. L'auteure s'interroge, comme dans ses oeuvres de fiction, sur la mouvance du passé qui échappe à la pérennité et se modifie selon les tonalités du vécu postérieur. D'ailleurs, l'appréhension du passé est continue, lente et ne devient approfondie qu'avec une longue expérience:

> Tout cela est bien curieux, Il semblerait que l'on ne rejoint ses gens que lorsqu'on atteint l'âge qu'ils avaient, alors qu'à côté d'eux, on ne comprenait rien à leur vaste solitude. (p. 143)

Ainsi, Gabrielle Roy dût attendre d'avoir la soixantaine pour comprendre l'infini chagrin de sa mère.

A travers sa mémoire féconde, l'auteure questionne aussi l'étroite relation entre le vécu et la création. Dès qu'un livre est en marche, même encore indistinct dans l'inconscient, tout "y entre et s'y mêle comme à une rivière, tout au long de sa course, l'eau de ses affluents". (p.229). A plusieurs reprises, l'auteure souligne l'origine d'une scène d'un personnage puisée dans sa vie, mais aussi plusieurs rapprochements surgissent de la mémoire des lectrices/lecteurs de Roy. Ainsi, l'inquiète miss O'Rooke de La petite poule d'eau semble engendrée par Adèle, l'une des soeurs de Gabrielle.

Cette oeuvre rassemble des forces vives encore inemployées et nous présente Gabrielle Roy jeune à la fois comme une femme indépendante, audacieuse, voire déviante, et aussi par moments trop sage, très angoissée et recherchant l'appui d'être chers, sa mère, Stephen et Esther ou encore s'évadant dans le rêve, dans sa "sauvagerie à elle", vers les rivages de la création.

L'autobiographie s'arrête là où les oeuvres de création commencent, c'est-à-dire quelques années avant la parution de Bonheur d'Occacion.

* * * * * * * * *

SUMMER COURSES

WMNS H398/1 Selected Topics in Women's Studies (3 credits)

Special Subject: PORNOGRAPHY AND CENSORSHIP

WMNS I398/1 Selected Topics in Women's Studies (3 credits)

Special Subject: FEMALE SEXUALITY

For more information call 879 8521

The great Victorian con

LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN THE GREAT COUNTRY HOUSES

Adeline Hartcup, Segwick and Jackson Merrimack. $19.95, 240pp.

by Patricia Morley

Queen Victoria's society has become known as an ethically conservative age where the family was central and familial values revered: an age of Motherhood and chivalry. Adeline Hartcup shows that it deserves to be remembered for its hypocrisy.

Hartcup, a British journalist, has already written Below Stairs in the Great Country Houses and Children of the Great Country Houses. In this third volume on the life of the "Upper Ten Thousand" in nineteenth-century England, she examines the personal lives of the British aristocracy, and marriage as a social and legal institution. She maintains a delicate balance between historical gossip and social history. After all, historians are gossips, although few of them acknowledge the fact. Her sources include diaries of the period, family archives from the great houses, and county record offices

The topic, "ways of loving and failing to love," includes larger social attitudes to la vie sentimentale, attitudes entrenched in law and custom. Liberal North Americans are accustomed to viewing with disdain other cultures and other times when certain members of society were not protected under the law: slavery; foot-binding; concubines. It may come as a shock to many of us to realize just how helpless women were only one hyndred years ago in the society which served as a model for many of our own laws and customs.

The great families were intricately linked, as Hartcup puts it, "by inter-marriage and inter-adultery." Aristocratic marriage settlements resembled international treaties. Politics, land and money were all considered in planning such marriages, and chastity in women (in Dr. Johnson's phrase) was a all-important because the whole of property is involved in it". Sexual licence was condoned in men, while scandal was not: discretion was the order of the day. The Church supported the status quo, and contraception was considered sinful.

The game consisted of trying, against enormous odds, to bring love and marriage together. Mating rituals, which could be as cruel and ruthless as those of primitive tribes, went on at balls and in drawing rooms, "the jousting ground." Money, as Byron put it was the magnet, and women were pawns. Wives possessed nothing in common law, including control over their own children. A deserted wife was not entitled to maintenance and had no claim on any property or money she may have brought into the marriage: "The day after their wedding Byron told his wife that they must separate, if possible after she was already on the way towards producing an heir for him; he would then use the fortune she had brought him, he said, to enable him to live abroad, far away from his wife and child in England."

Queen Victoria opposed female suffrage as "mad, wicked folly", and went so far as to say that a certain lady who supported the idea "ought to get a good whipping."

Hartcup writes with perception and wit, allowing the facts to speak for themsleves. Militant she is not, but some of her facts are as uncomfortable as dynamite. The lively text has forty black and white illustrations, serious and satiric.

(from The Birmingham News)

****

CALL FOR PAPERS: M O T H E R W O R K October 3,4,5, 1985

A feminist interdisciplinary workshop sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

This workshop will explore the history of motherwork, mothering networks, social and legal policies shaping motherwork, mothering and schooling, the class and ethnic organization of mothering, expert definitions of motherwork, and related topics.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPERS JUNE 30, 1985.

Suzanne Peters
Simone de Beauvoir Institute
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd West
Montréal, Québec
H3G 1M8 Tel: (514) 879 8521

Alele tipitomba
Nicaragua Dec '84 - Jan '85

By Isabel Bliss

I went to Nicaragua because I was fascinated by a country where, I had heard, women had the credibility to say to men, in response to the latter's whistles or whatever, "No es revolucionario" ("that's not revolutionary").

A coffee-picking brigade seemed the ideal arrangement, for it was a concrete gesture of assistance to the Nicaraguan people as well as an opportunity to live in and observe first-hand, at a very immediate and rural level, a society in the process of reconstruction. I stepped out of the sterility and safety of this shopping center world (at Christmas rush time, no less) and finally came face to face with how the majority of people alive today on this planet have to live: in appallingly substandard conditions.

Three nights after leaving hyperplasticized, carpeted, insulated Miami, we were bumping up a dirt road in the mountains north of Matagalpa. The trucks had to be pushed to start and they didn't have lights. North central Nica isn't safe but it's not as dangerous as it is a bit further north, where the U.S. backed contras are wreaking havoc.

Because of the threat of U.S. invasion many Nicaraguans were training for defense, and consequently the harvest was in dire need of help. We internationalists were warmly welcomedat UPE (state farm) La Lima. For two rainy weeks we rose at 4:00 a.m. to go squelch in the mud andpick as many red and black (like the Sandinista flag) coffee beans as we could, all the while minding out for poisonous snakes.

The rice, beans and tortillas took their tool on our middle class North American stomaches, so used as they are to both an incredible variety of, and highly processed, food. One rainy night when both my flashlights

had conked out and I just couldn't wait, I waded through the mud to the equally muddy and almost overflowing outhouse only to find out that.. I hadn't waited. I was there alone most of the night, with only gunshots in the mountains for distraction.

Christmas day was sunny and special. Every child got a pen or pencil. There weren't enough to go around for everybody, and the Nicaraguans' hope for the future is in their children. That such a mundane thing as a pencil could be so precious had never occured to me.

My Spanish was at children's level so I made many young friends. Women usually start having children at fifteen. Lack of sanitation and health care etc. are major obstacles for mothers. Their struggle is for survival, personally and nationally, and the form feminism takes there is one of raising the value of the work women do, their status and self-respect, and their public participation. Sex roles are still entrenched though, which disappointed me as a radical feminist searching for a feminist paradise (not on Lesbos either, by the way).

Back in Managua we saw more clearly how the economic blocade is hurting the country. For instance, lack of materials and funds have made rebuilding from the 1972 earthquake, and from Somoza's bombing blitzes before the FSLN triumph in 1979, almost impossible. What a strange scattered city, filled with platano stands, great graffitti, and, as in the mountains, the militia. Militarism has always been abhorrent to me, but I realize the luxury of that opinion.

Now I'm back to wealth, food, and privilege. The media blockade of Nicaragua frustrates me immensely. I've seen amazing courage and hope on the part of the Nicaraguans, who aren't fancy people, 'communists' intent on overthrowing the rest of the Americas, who don't even have zippers on their pants, and I'm angry that their spirit is being annihilated by imperialist lies and bullets. I think of Rene, fifteen years old with a twenty pound gun on his back, fighting in the mountains where his cousin was killed just four days before Rene was to join him, and I try to deal with my feelings of impotence by doing what I can.

FEMINIST MEN?

by

Elsa Scheider

There are two questions I want to deal with. First, is it possible to be both a man and a feminist? Second, what's the difference between a feminist and a pro-feminist man?

If one defines feminists as people who affirm the right of girls and women to lead lives of our own choosing, then yes, in theory at least, men can be feminists.

However, many feminist women and men supportive of feminism are unwilling to define any men as feminists. We prefer terms such as pro-feminist or anti-patriarchal.

Why the distinction between feminists and pro-feminist men? Women and men have a different relationship to feminism. For instance, someone who hasn't experienced racial discrimination doesn't have the same intrincie understanding of racism as someone who has. Similarly, men haven't gone through the sexims women face, and one wonder if they can really get the good understanding of it as women do - having learnt it from experience. As a male frined once remarked, a lot of what is disc iscrimination against women is a temptation held out to pro-feminist men: "The system is just set up for you, especially if you happen to be white and from at least a middle class background. Just step right in in and belong".

A further reason to distinguish between feminists and pro-feminst men has to do with who is to determine what women need and want. Men can play an important part in encouraging the creation of a feminist society: most of all, they can work to alter the a-ti-woman attitudes of many men . But it is up to women to define our needs and goals. A pro-feminist man is one supportive of our efforts.

Two further differences between feminists and pro-feminist men are the average degree of commitment to fostering feminism, and the average amount of internalized sexism.

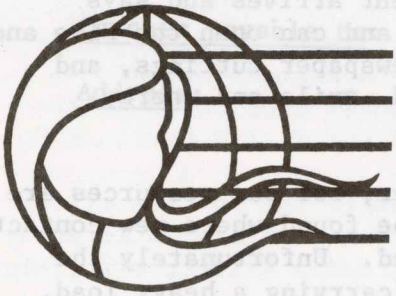
Some men are strongly pro-feminist. I've heard of one who

took a woman to see Mary Daly on their first date. Some Women's Studies students are men. At Concordia, Chengiah Ragaven is currently trying to organize a one-day seminar to look at feminism from a man's perspective. (For more information, call 879-4177).

Still, such men are rare. Last autumn, at a Concordia Women's Collective on heterosexuality, woman after woman spoke of the difficulty of finding sufficiently pro-feminist men. It was frequently not a case of their knowing mainly anti-feminist men: still, feminism was, by and large, a far lower priority even for supportive men. The women involved in feminist activities and in a relationsip with a man often felt they led double lives: the friends the couple held in common tended to be separate from those the woman worked with in feminist projects.

I'd like to be able to dismiss the women at the Collective as atypical. Instead, what they said reinforced what I've heard over and over again.

As for internalized sexism, in our society nobody escapes this totally. For example, many women care to be conventionnally attractive, even though they/we know how destructive such intrained standards are. Still, men often have more internalized sexism: they may, for example, feel they're being wonderful if they do their share of the housework. Joanne Kates, in Still Ain't Satisfied, speake for many heterosexual feminists: "I live with a man and I love him dearly. Do you know how much he enrages me, this man who struggles daily to eradicate his seixism?" He may have, for example, an undesired preference for being cajoled rather than told by a woman, which may be expecially hard on a woman striving to be , for once , assertive rather than manipulative.



1985
"Time for action..."

International Conference On The Status Of Girls
6161 St. Denis Street
Suite 4.06
Montréal, Québec
Canada H2S 2R5
Tel.: (514) 274-3581

OCTOBER 29, 30, and 31 1985

UPDATE ON THE READING ROOM

by : Joan Kohner
(Institute Documentalist)

How can one see at a glance the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies? Perhaps by casting an eye down the course list offered by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute or by standing in the Institute Reading Room and making a ninety degree turn. This is what I do most days, marvelling at the multitude of subjects covered by our collection of over 1500 books on women. Looking around the room one sees all the subject classifications central to Women's Studies, Religion, biography, anthropology, sports, women in the labour force, family life, feminism,and psychology, sociology of women, education for women, their legal status, women in the arts and then books written by women, particularly in Québec literature.

Resources on women at work and sociololy perhaps from the largest group of titles within our collection and we have particularly acquired works on Canadian women. It has been interesting over the last few years to see how various aspects of women's lives have become subjects of study. There was at one time a concentration on women in management positions, on women's position in the education system and harassment came to be know and many were searching a concentration on topics such as immigrant women; women and health, pornography and incest.

Much of the information on subjects of current interest has not yet found its way into book form, so we rely heavily on our Vertical File, the collection of ephemera we have made. This is bursting at the seams and it needs much patience to organise, but it is well worth the effort when a dejected student arrives and says "I have not been able to find anything on..." and can open the File and say "Have you seen this": and show briefs, newspaper cuttings, and journal reprints which being forth a satisfied smile and energy rekindled.

One does not always succeed however, for our resources are limited, but often a name or an address can be found where new contacts and sources of information can be investigated. Unfortunately the sources are few in Montreal, small groups are carrying a heavy load.

How wonderful it would be to be able to plug into a resource like that being acquired by the University of Waterloo Library with a $28,12.50 grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council to assist in the acquisition of a collection of 35,000 issues of women's periodicals published in England from 1893 to 1977, what potentiol for research lies there!

However, our collection of periodicals fills the gap. We gather information on women's groups and activities from Montréal, to Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver in La Vie en Rose Broadside, Herizons and Kinesis, periodicals which are not in the University themselves to academic collections. We also have some very esoteric regular arrivals like Nigerwives and Feminist Forum Feminism in Japan, Quehaceres from Santo Domingo and Al-Raida from Beirut University College. These again are ephemeral in nature, on printed sheets, in pamphlet form, bu they provide us with a fascinating glimpse of the lives and problems of women in other countries.

Our collection of Governement Documents too, is constantly being augmented and we are fortunate that the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women offered us copies of all their publications to ensure their accessibility. We are now able therefore to offer loan copies of their material as well as reference copies.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Proceedings for the FEMME 1982 Conference (International Conference on Research and Teaching Related to Women) are now available in English. A copy will be mailed to all the registered participants. Others can obtain a copy for $12 each ($6 for students with an I.D.) plus $2 per copy for postage if they wish it to be mailed.

Cheques payable to: Concordia University: Femme Conference Proceedings

Address: c/o Mair Verthuy
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West
Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1M8

ACTIVITIES

organized by the Institute

Report from the co-curricular committee

by Sherry Simon

With a greatly reduced budget, and with the energy of inexperience, the co-curricular committee has organized a number of quite different events and co-sponsored others with various departments The most visible of these - because of the big red poster produced by the Tenth Anniversary committee - is the speakers' series co-sponsored by the Département d'études françaises and the Institute. At time of writing we are half-way through the six scheduled events.

Françoise Guénette gave a talk on the ideological and pratical problems of producing the highly successful feminist magazine La Vie en Rose. Problems: defining what feminist information is, appealing to a wide public, using slick advertising techniques and flashy cover-pages which might contradict the principles of the information inside the magazine. Astonishing success: after five years, most of the original crew of the magazine - who began with little or no experience of print journalism - has still not experienced burn-out.

Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood talked to a full house (Lounge) on the theoretical difficulties - and creative possibilities - of being a feminist translator. Suzanne won a prize for her translation of Lucien Francoeur and now can't believe that she spent three years of her life working on this aggressively alienating language. She is now translating Daphne Marlatt and Jovette Marchessault (she's one of those very rare ambitextrous translators). With tons of examples and a solid theoretical framework, Suzanne eloquently made her case for translating as "écriture".

Yolande Villemaire initiated the series of readings to be continued with Marguerite Andersen, Gail Scott and France Théoret. She read in her usual dramatic fashion from a novel soon to be published, La Constellation du cygne.

Others speakers to have been invited to the Institute: Françoise Collin who gave an informal talk to a most enthusiastic group on changing feminist concepts of "difference" ; Erica Ritter, writer-in residence during the first semester, who talked on "Women's lip" with

her own brand of same.

Yet to come at time of writing but a distant (and surely happy) memory for those who were lucky enough to attend: the very distinguished scholar Beryl Rowlands of York University speaking on "Women and medieval health". Also to come: a showing of the NFB film "Behind the Veil" and of the prize winning "Sonatine" both to be followed by discussion with the film-makers.

* * * * * *

WEEK-END AT LACOLLE

by Mona McLean

The Simone de Beauvoir Institute week-end retreat at Lacolle, on March 1st - 3rd, 1985 organized by the Liaison Committee (Jo Vellacott, Elsa Scheider and Jo-Anne Beggs) was considered a great success by all in attendance. Laughts filled the rooms of Lacolle as Muriel Bishop, our most gracious visitor from Kingston Ontario, reintroduced us to play. Elizabeth Sacca and Stella Jaon kept the fire place burning brightly as we passed an afternoon in a lively exchange of ideas on feminist theory and practices.

Our two day sojourn in the country was a perfect ending to a long week of meetings at Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

Special thanks to Lesli Cotton for safely driving us out and back by van.

To those who missed the Great Get Away Week-end at Lacolle this time please join us next year! Its time to play!

* * * * * *

(P.S. Mona McLean helped a great deal in organizing the weekend - Jo Vellacott)

A N N O U N C E M E N T

Mini-Conference: Building The Bridges
Quebec Women Pulling Together For Survical and True Security

Date: April 13 7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Hall Bldg. Concordia
April 14 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Place to be confirmed

A coalition of Women's groups including the Montreal Voice of Women, is in the process of organizing a conference that will focus on Women and Survival. As the Decade for Women draws to an end, a coalition of women's groups across Canada is organizing an International Conference whose theme is "THE URGENCY FOR TRUE SECURITY-WOMEN'S ALTERNATIVES FOR NEGOTIATING PEACE". The Montreal Conference is a prelude to the International meeting which will take place in Halifax, June 5 - 9, 1985. Proposals developed at this Mini-Conference will be presented at the Halifax meeting.

The Montreal Conference will include women from various linguisticultural and economic backgrounds. Saturday evening, the film, "Speaking Our Peace" by Bonnie Klein and Terri Nash will be shown, followed by a question and answer session. This will feature Bonnie, Terri and several women who were consultants on the film. Sunday, Madeleine Parent will give the keynote address, followed by a day a day of workshops on various survival issues. Some of the subjects are:

Despair and Empowerment
Economic Survival
Women and Development
Visible Minority women and Survival
Sharing Power and Responsibility
Feminism and Militarism
Economics of Survival

WE NEED SOME HELP .... If you have some time we could use your help on a committee (program, food, media etc:.)

Please call: Dorothy 738-3663
Sheila 484-3417
Joan 738-4398

FILM PERNICIEUX EN VILLE.

par Michelle Vigeant

Des suggestions pour aller voir Paris, Texas, film tendancieux et qui, pourtant, séduit même des féministes. Le son d'une guitare langoureuse marque les bornes du chemin à parcourir par nous à travers les personnages du film qui ne nous laissent pas indifférentes et il faut savoir pourquoi. Après avoir discuté avec ma compagne Carolynn, j' i conclu qu'il fallait séparer le contenu de la forme filmique et voir comment cette dernière sert le contenu. Il semble que la perception est indissociable de l'expérience subjective. Dans mon cas étant donné un des thèmes du film je m'y suis retrouvée en tant que mono-parentale.

Paris, Texas est un film régressif et réactionnaire, dangereux si on se laisse prendre par la puissance des images, des plans, du montage, du son, de la trame narrative. D'ailleurs, ce sont ces moyens ensemble qui suscitent nos émotions qui nous éloignent d'une capacité de clairvoyance, d'analyse intellectuelle, La trame narrative est construite autour de clichés idéalistes situés culturellement dans l'idéologie traditionnelle: la famille, la paternité, la maternité, le retour aux sources, la liberté, la fraternité, le monde des hommes, les relations hommes-femmes.

C'est l'histoire de Travis qui erre dans le désert du Texas à la recherche de Paris où il a acheté un coin de terre quelques années auparavant. Il ne se souvient plus pourquoi, Il est amnésique. Il voulait s'u installer avec son fils et la mère de son fils, son épouse. Paris, Texas? Parce que c'est là que son père et sa mère se sont rencontrés et que là, peut-être, il a été conçu. C'est le retour aux sources. Avec son frère, venu pour le ramener chez-lui à Los Angeles, il retrouve par étape, une apparence sociale, la parole, se remet à manger, peu à peu se souvient. Il demeure un peu bizarre: il ne veut pas prendre l'avion, ne dort pas la nuit, ne mange pas souvent, parle très peu et doucement, regarde beuacoup l'horizon et le paysage avec des jumelles. La première nuit chez Walt, il astique toutes les chaussures de la maison après avoir fait la vaisselle. Tavis retrouve son fils et c'est une rencontre touchante où le père observe respectueusement et silencieusement le fils poli. L'enfant blond habillé de blanc descend l'escalier éclairé tandis que le père demeure dans la pénombre. On regarde des "homemovies" en super8 et les images du

passé bouleverse Travis. Devant l'émotion de son père, Hunter se rapproche: "Good night, DAD!" Le lendemain, Travis cherche naïvement des images de père dans des revues. La domestique l'aide à trouver le costume recherché, le père riche qui se tient droit avec dignité dans son habit à cravate. Cette fois-ci, Hunter est séduit par Travis; il se trouve même chanceux d'avoir deux pères. Début d'une séquence d'humour. Le père marche de son côté de rue; Hunter marche sur le trottoir opposé et copie tout ce que Travis fait: l'image du père et de la socialisation, pirouettes et bouffonneries. Nous, le public, sommes vraiment contents que tout aille bien.

Travis décide de retrouver Jane, sa femme, et Hunter veut le suivre pour voir sa mère. En route, ils téléphonent chez Walt et Anne. Il y a trop d'emphase mise sur le père biologique par rapport à Walt, dont la vie est bouleversée au rythme des impulsions paternelles. La responsanilité d'être parent n'est pas du tout développée. Les personnages de Travis et d'Hunter sont des propositions d'héros modernes et ne sont pas réalistes. Voilà le père et le fils, aventuriers de la route, telle la représentation d'un rituel, l'enfant mâle reconnu comme tel et admis dans le monde des hommes. Ils retrouvent Jane travaillant dans un établissement où les phantasmes mâles sont échangés pour de l'argent. Le public se retrouve voyeur du voyeur et c'est excitant comme interdit. Travis en tant que client voyeur retrouve Jane de l'autre côté de la vitre-miroir et lui fait une scène. Jane calme le client, même là, la femme materne. Lui, il pleure et ne parle plus. Il est touchant de voir un homme pleurer, saisir l'éclat de la larme brillant dans le noir. Travis s'en va. Avec Hunter, il se souvient de sa propre mère comme étant une personne simple. Il dénonce son père, l'accusant d'avoir accolé ses rêves à l'identité de son épouse. Il faisait croire aux gens qu'elle venait de Paris, France, pour leur dire à la toute fin qu'elle venait de Paris, Texas. C'est rare qu'on admette ouvertement que l'homme participe à définir la femme. Hunter grandit vite aux côtés du père et dit à Travis, hésitant, de retourner auprès de la mère.

C'est dans les quinze dernières minutes du film d'une durée de deux heures que nous apprenons pourquoi l'éclatement de la famille. Travis retourne voir Jane et, en tant que client, lui raconte son histoire. Il dit: "elle etait belle et jeune, lui était plus vieux et pas si beau. Leur reltaion était une de rêve..." jusqu'à ce que la

la réalité saute aux yeux: pourvoir aux nécessités familiales. A l'ouvrage, Travis fabrique dans sa tête des mises-en-scénes de jalousie. De plus en plus perturbé, Travis s'est mis à attacher une clochette à la cheville de Jane pour l'empêcher de fuir la nuit. Un soir il l'a attachée au poêle et s'est réveillé, seul, dans la roulotte en feu. Nous entendons ce monologue pendant que la caméra fixe le visage de Jane qui attire l'attention et les émotions au fur et à mesure qu'elle reconnaît son passé.

Travis ne peut pas assumer les conséquences du passé et abandonne à nouveau Hunter après avoir réuni la mère et le fils. C'est une rencontre pleine d'émotions pour ceux-ci et pour nous, qui voyons au centre de l'écran, le ventre maternel et le visage de l'enfant qui s'y réfugie. Le père, en bas sur le pavé, regarde de loin le succès de sa mission. Travis part dans son automobile sur les grands chemins de la vie de l'homme, seule séquence que mon fils n'a pas aimé. Le père n'a pas de responsabilité vis-à-vis de son enfant. Selon l'idéologie traditionnelle, tout est centré sur l'homme, et l'Autre n'est que satellite accessoire, dans un dualisme qui hiérarchise, qui sépare, qui l'aliène dans sa vision patriarcale.

Paris, Texas est un film régressif parce qu'il propose des images d'hommes qui font encore références aux héros mythiques. Pourtant même les hommes contestent cette idée, héros en tant que pourvoyeur. La société patriarcale vit son propre cul-de-sac ne voyant plus d'alternatives à leur propre système. Paris,Texas se prétend un western moderne. Le cowboy vivant de transcendance qui se pointe en tant que sauveur des démunis, et qui, pour cela, doit vivre sans attache, sans responsabilité, sans lien: le superhomme. Régressif parce que le film nous fait penser à la rébellion des hommes des années cinquante, la mode "beat" qui valorisait ce style de vie:

> "The short-lived apotheosis of the male rebellion, the Beat, rejected both job and marriage. In the Beat, the two strands of male protest - one directed against the white-collar work world and the other against the suburbanized family life that work was supposed to support - come together into the first all-out critique of American consumer culture...
> The Beat pioneers were deeply, if intermittently, attached to each other. Women and their demands for responsibility were, at worst, irritating and more often just uninteresting compared to the ecstatic possibilities of mate adventure." (1)

(1) Ehrenreich, Barbara: The Hearts of Men, New York; Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984, p.52, 54.

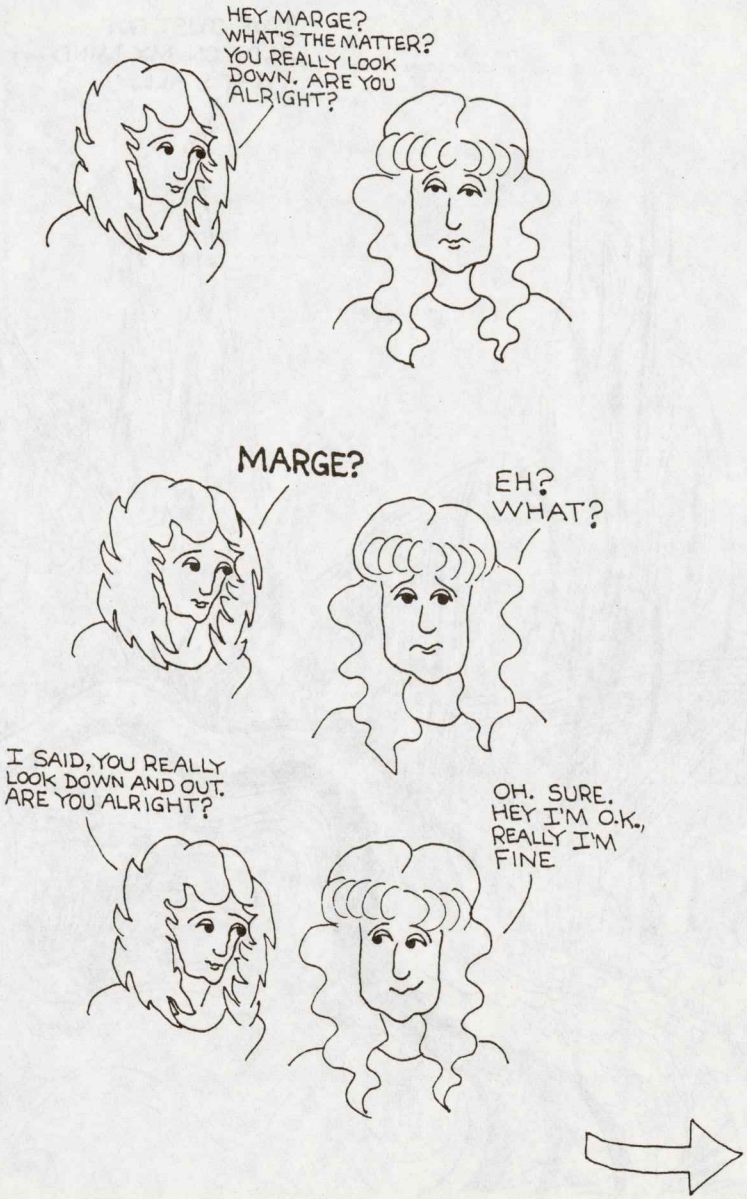
Réactionnaire parce que Paris,Texas suggère très peu le mouvement contemporain des femmes qui a commencé à changer leur statut de personnes inférioriséés et, par le fait même, transforme sans cesse la vision du monde en général. Ici, la représentation des femmes demeure stéréotypée: soit qu'elle soit mère et/ou putain. Jane, sans son homme et même s'il la battait, ne pouvait plus s'occuper seule de son enfant, et pour gagner sa vie, rien n'était possible sauf devenir un objet sexuel.

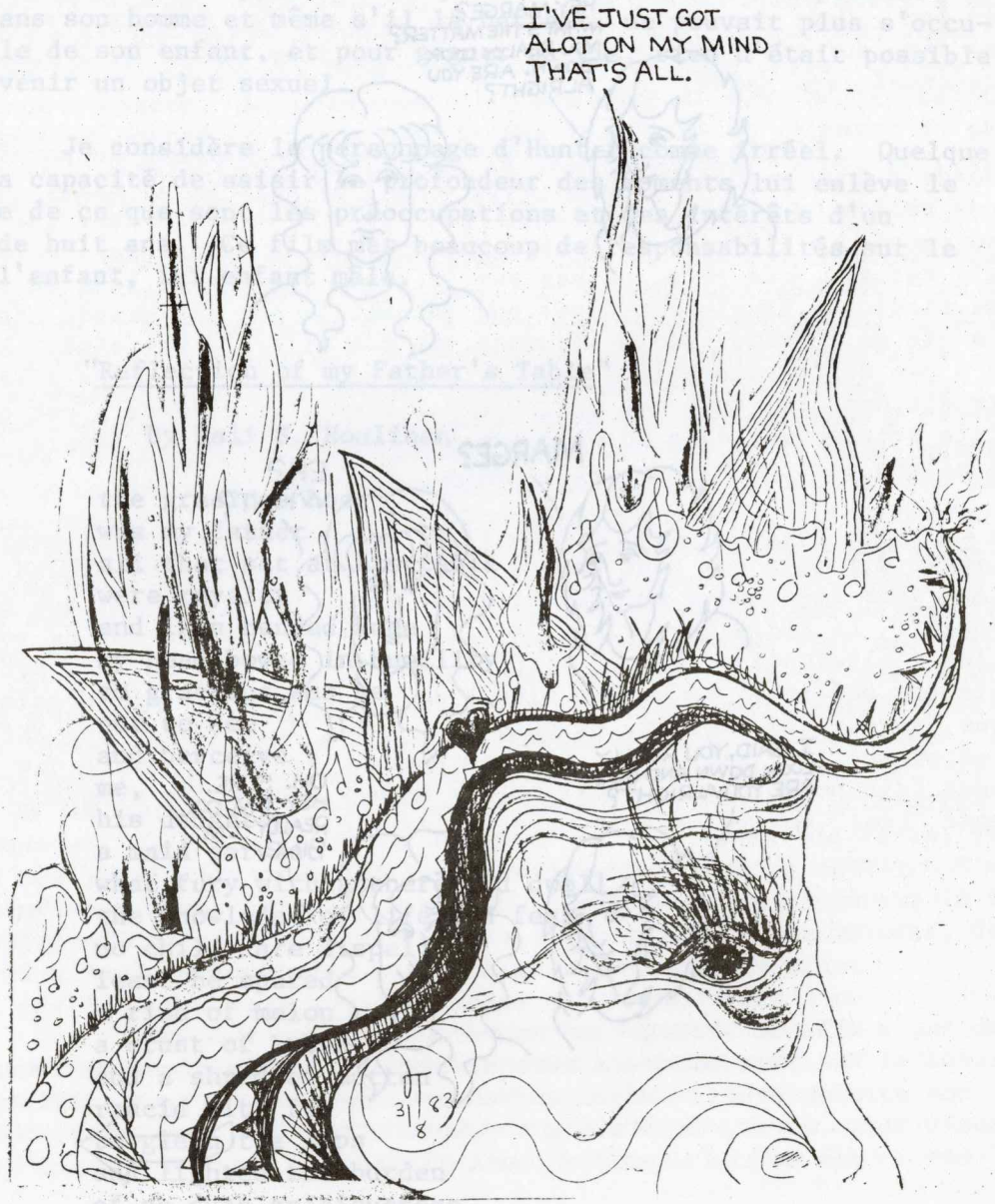
Je considère le personnage d'Hunter comme irréel. Quelque part, sa capacité de saisir la profondeur des moments lui enlève le réalisme de ce que sont les préoccupations et les intérêts d'un enfant de huit ans. Ce film met beaucoup de responsabilités sur le dos de l'enfant, ici enfant mâle.

"Reflection of my Father's Table"

by Kali S. Houlihan

the gracious host
was my father
all that sat at his table
were royalty
and i on bended knee
my head bowed in humility
so gracious was he
not to see
and perceive
me,
his daughter
a maid servant
what fury within there did dwell
the knowledge of life and fear
no child dare dispel;
least be spared
a rind of melon
a crust of bread
and a shred of mutton
rancid with fat
to glean the lips
and lighten the burden
of oh such graciousness
so in my father's light did they dwell
they; The guests; The imminent - and "i" the unspoken "other"


HEY MARGE? WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU REALLY LOOK DOWN. ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
MARGE?
EH? WHAT?
I SAID, YOU REALLY LOOK DOWN AND OUT. ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
OH. SURE. HEY I'M O.K., REALLY I'M FINE



42 Contributed by : Denise Tremblay

VIVRE L'
LIVING
'85

MONTREAL

OCTOBER 16-20 OCTOBRE

CONFERENCE PRINCIPALE
Bruno Duborgel
Université de Lyon

MAIN CONFERENCE
Robert Witkin
University of Exeter

CASE POSTALE 343 / P.O. BOX 343 CHOMEDEY, LAVAL, QUEBEC H7W4T2